

*Conference d'Halifax,
Aout 1898.*

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*THE CATHOLIC SCHOOLS OF THE PROVINCE OF
QUEBEC, THEIR HISTORY AND
ORGANIZATION.*

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There are few more interesting subjects than the history of the labors of those intrepid navigators who first settled on the banks of the St. Lawrence.

Though discovered in 1534, by Jacques Cartier, no successful attempts at colonizing New France was made previous to the opening of the seventeenth century.

As soon as the foundations of a permanent settlement were laid, the authorities at Quebec with the approval of the French government, endeavored by every possible means to promote the civilization of the Indians and the cultivation of the soil, and the intellectual development of the inhabitants.

The Educational History of the Province may be divided into two principal periods; the French regime, from the foundation of Quebec to the Treaty of Paris, 1763; the English regime, from the Treaty of Paris to the present time.

From an educational point of view the French regime in Canada affords to the studious much interesting material for thought, for in those days now long gone by, when civilization was in conflict with barbarism, the efforts which were made towards the founding of the first houses of education in Montreal and Quebec were such as to excite our keenest admiration. It may flatter our pride as Canadians to recollect that the first Classical College founded in America was founded in 1636, one year before the legislature of Massachusetts had decided upon the establishment of Harvard.

However instructive might be the history of public instruction in the Province of Quebec from the time of Champlain to our own day, it is my intention, nevertheless, to confine these remarks to our own present Catholic school system and to make them as concise as possible. Thus, I trust, shall I better fulfil the practical aims of this convention. I ask in advance your indulgence while I use a language that is not my mother tongue.

The distinguishing characteristic of our school law is the absolute liberty enjoyed by each of the two religious denominations of controlling its own schools, in keeping with the wishes of the parents of the pupils in such a manner that Catholics, in municipalities where they form the majority, cannot interfere with the rights of Protestants, and *vice versa*. In this respect, of all the school laws in the Dominion, ours may be considered as the most perfect and best adapted to maintain religious harmony.

It must not be forgotten that there is but one school law for the Province, that all schools, Protestant as well as Catholic, are organized under this law. I do not make this remark for you, gentlemen, but for the information of those persons who, not having specially studied the organization of our schools, are under the strange impression that the school law is not the same for all in the Province of Quebec.

At the head of our Educational System is the Council, composed of the Catholic Bishops and of an equal number of Catholic laymen, and an equal number of Protestants.

The Council is divided into two committees, the one consisting of the Catholic and the other of the Protestant members. This Council was first formed in 1859, and was composed of eleven Catholics and four Protestants. It existed until 1875, when the DeBoucherville administration modified its constitution by dividing it into two separate and independent committees, one Catholic, the other Protestant. This change was made in order to remove any possible cause of friction between the two religious denominations, by giving to the Protestants, who form the minority, the most complete control over their own schools. In presenting this law, M. de Boucherville proved himself a statesman of liberal and enlightened views; under its provisions, as well as previous to its passage, the Protestant minority have been treated, not only with

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justice, but with generosity, and no government has ever considered, much less proposed, a method to curtail in any manner the privileges guaranteed them by the constitution. This law is a monument of religious toleration, of which the Province of Quebec is justly proud.

Each committee, Catholic and Protestant, has its meetings separate, and it may fix the period and number thereof. It establishes its quorum, and appoints a chairman and a secretary.

Everything within the scope of the functions of the Council of Public Instruction, which specially concerns the schools of Catholics, is within the exclusive jurisdiction of the Catholic Committee. In the same manner, everything which specially concerns the public instruction of Protestants, is within the exclusive jurisdiction of the Protestant Committee.

The two Committees have made regulations which are almost identical.

These regulations concern public schools, courses of study, Normal School, the examination of candidates for the position of inspector, the examination of candidates for teachers' certificates, instruction, school houses, school furniture, the choice of text books, etc.

THE SUPERINTENDENT.

There is a Superintendent of Public Instruction, named by the Lieutenant-Governor in Council. He is chairman of the Council. He is also a member of each of the Committees, but he has a right to vote only in the Committee of the religious faith to which he belongs.

The Superintendent has charge of the Department of Public Instruction, and in the exercise of his functions is bound to comply with the directions of the Council of Public Instruction, or with those of the Catholic or Protestant Committee, as the case may be.

The Superintendent draws up annually a detailed statement of the sums required for public instruction, and submits it to the Government; he lays before the Legislature a report containing a statement of what has been done with the amounts voted for education; an account of the actual state of education in the Province; statistics and information respecting educational institutions, and in general respecting all subjects connected with literary and intellectual progress.

THE SCHOOLS.

The public schools are divided into elementary schools, model schools, and academies. Some of the public schools are said to be "under control," the others are said to be "subsidized." "Schools under control" are those in which the teachers are engaged and paid by the school commissioners or trustees. "Subsidized schools" are those not under control, which receive a grant from the Government or from school commissioners or trustees.

In order to interest the people more deeply in the schools, and to give more unity and strength to the system, the legislature has grafted it on to the parish organization, thus incorporating such parish three times, (a) for church affairs, (b) for municipal affairs, (c) for school affairs. Generally speaking, therefore, each parish is incorporated as a school municipality and has one or more schools controlled by school commissioners, or by trustees in municipalities where dissentient schools are established. School municipalities are erected at the request of the interested parties, by an order of the Lieutenant-Governor in Council.

The school commissioners and trustees in each municipality form separate corporations, but any powers conferred, or any duties imposed on school commissioners, apply also to school trustees.

Boards of school commissioners are composed of five members, and boards of trustees for dissentient schools of three. They are elected for three years by the proprietors of real estate paying taxes or monthly fees. The formalities required for the election of commissioners and trustees are somewhat similar to those required for the election of municipal councillors.

All voters resident in the school municipality and the clergymen of all religious denominations ministering in it, are eligible as commissioners or trustees.

Any election of school commissioner or trustee may be contested on the ground of violence, corruption or fraud.

For the municipalities in which no election of school commissioners or trustees has taken place within the time prescribed, the Lieutenant-Governor may, upon the recommendation of the Superintendent, appoint commissioners or trustees. The duties

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of school commissioners and trustees are numerous and important ; they engage and dismiss teachers ; see that the courses of study approved by the Committees of the Council are followed ; make regulations for the government of their schools ; fix the time of the annual public examinations ; oblige the Secretary-Treasurer to keep his accounts and register according to instructions received from the Superintendent ; hear and decide disputes between the parents, or children and teachers ; require that no other books be used in their schools than those authorized by the Council of Public Instruction or either of the Committees. However, the Cure or priest administering a Catholic Church has the exclusive right of selecting the books having reference to religion and morals for the use of pupils of his religious faith, the Protestant Committee having similar powers respecting Protestant pupils.

Furthermore, the school commissioners do whatever may be expedient with regard to the buildings ; repairing, renewing, or renting, if needs be, of school houses ; have the responsibility of seeing that the school furniture is kept in repair or renewed ; cause to be levied the taxes deemed necessary for the support of the schools under their control ; may divide the municipality into school districts, may change the limit of these districts ; may establish girls' schools distinct from boys' ; shall cause an annual census of the children in the school municipality to be made, giving the age of the children and the number of children actually attending school ; shall in each year make two reports of their proceedings to the Superintendent.

All decisions of school commissioners are entered in the minute book of the board, and in certain specified cases ratepayers who are interested, may appeal to the Superintendent from such decisions.

The Superintendent may summon all parties to appear before him, or he may delegate his powers to a school inspector or to any other person whom he may choose, who then acts in his name and reports to him. The decision of the Superintendent is final, but he may from time to time repeal or modify it according to circumstances.

The principal cases in which an appeal to the Superintendent is allowed, are : concerning school sites ; the limits of school districts ; the construction and repairing of school houses.

SCHOOL INSPECTORS.

The Inspectors of Catholic Schools are appointed by the Lieutenant-Governor in Council, on the recommendation of the Catholic Committee of the Council of Public Instruction.

The duties of these School Inspectors are to visit the different schools of their districts of inspection, to examine the pupils, to inspect the accounts of the Secretary-Treasurer of each municipality, and to ascertain whether the provisions of the laws and regulations respecting public instruction are carried out.

No person is eligible for the position of School Inspector unless he has attained the age of twenty-five years, has obtained a diploma authorizing him to teach, has successfully taught school during at least five years, has passed successfully an examination upon his fitness and ability to fulfil the duties of the office.

The Inspectors are obliged to make full and exact reports to the Superintendent on the state of the schools visited. In the autumn, each School Inspector visits the different school municipalities of his district, and in the most central part of each municipality he delivers during two days, a series of lectures on the art of teaching. In the spring, he pays his annual visit of inspection to each school of his district of inspection, examines the pupils in the different subjects of the course of study, and forms an opinion of the value of the methods of teaching followed by the teacher.

BOARDS OF EXAMINERS.

There is a central Board of Examiners for the examination of candidates for teachers' diplomas. The diplomas granted by this Board are of three grades: Elementary, Model School, and Academic. It is composed of ten members, appointed by the Lieutenant-Governor in Council, upon the recommendation of the Catholic Committee.

The examination is held in July of each year, at the places prescribed by the Central Board.

It is the duty of the Central Board to prepare the examination questions in the different subjects prescribed; to appoint deputy-examiners under whose charge the examination at the local centres will take place; and to send the examination questions to the different deputy-examiners.

At the close of the examination, the candidates' answers are forwarded to the Central Board; they are read and valued by the members, and diplomas granted to those who obtain the number of marks prescribed by the regulations.

This Central Board, and the Catholic Normal Schools, alone have power to grant diplomas valid for Catholic Schools.

DISSENTIENT SCHOOLS.

The laws on Public Instruction for the Province of Quebec provide ample protection for the minority, and appear to be the surest guarantee of the maintenance of harmony between citizens holding different religious views. The clauses concerning dissentient schools are a convincing proof of this fact. In the school law a wise principle is embodied by which persons who cannot agree while living together, may separate and live apart.

This principle is the basis of the following article of the law :

"If in any municipality, the regulations and arrangements made by the School Commissioners for the management of any school are not agreeable to any number whatever of the proprietors, occupants, tenants, or ratepayers, professing a religious faith different from that of the majority of the inhabitants of such municipality, they may signify such dissent in writing, to the chairman of the Commissioners."

They then organize themselves into a separate corporation and elect a Board of School Trustees.

Thus, if in a school municipality the Catholics are the majority, the Protestants, by simply giving notice of dissent, may organize into a separate corporation; on the other hand, if the Protestants be the majority, the Catholics may dissent in the same manner; therefore, whether the minority be composed of Catholics or of Protestants, they may, if they so desire, have separate schools.

The notice of dissent is made and signed in triplicate, and is addressed to whom it concerns before the first of May. The election of trustees is held during the month of July following.

If in any municipality the ratepayers belonging to the religious denomination of the dissentients become the majority, they can give written notice of their intention to organize themselves under School Commissioners. In this case, the former majority become the minority, and they may in turn give notice of dissent and elect school trustees.

Dissentients are not liable for any school rates which may be imposed by the School Commissioners, except for the payment of debts incurred previous to the date of dissent. School rates paid by Catholic ratepayers are expended on Catholic schools ; those paid by Protestants are expended on Protestant schools.

Any person belonging to the religious minority may at any time become a dissentient, and any dissentient may, in like manner, declare his intention of ceasing to be a dissentient.

The minority in a school municipality may unite in supporting a dissentient school, situated at any point in the municipality.

If there is no dissentient school in a municipality, and anyone belonging to the religious minority, having children of school age, may dissent, and support a school in an adjoining municipality.

NORMAL SCHOOLS.

The most important subject of study at the Catholic Normal Schools, is Pedagogy. The course of study also comprises the following subjects: religious instruction, reading, elocution, grammar (French and English), composition, elements of mental and moral philosophy, universal history, geography, arithmetic, book-keeping, algebra, elements of geometry, mensuration, physics, chemistry, natural history, agriculture, drawing, music, military drill etc.

The diplomas are of three grades: Elementary, Model School, and Academic.

There is a bursary fund for teachers-in-training.

There are two Practice Schools in connection with each Normal School, one for boys, the other for girls, in which the teachers-in-training learn the art of teaching under the immediate surveillance of teachers in the boys' department, and of nuns in the girls' department, and under the direction of the Principal in both departments.

COURSES OF STUDY.

Two courses of study have been authorized by the Catholic Committee: one specific, the subjects in which candidates for teachers' diplomas must pass ; the other enumerates the various subjects taught in the different grades of public schools.

These courses of study have been carefully prepared, and all based on the programme of studies followed in France and in some other countries.

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Religious instruction holds the first place in the course, and it is given in all the schools.

We give below the subjects in which it is necessary to pass, to obtain each grade of diploma :

For the Elementary Diploma :—Reading, grammar, dictation, writing, composition, sacred history, history of Canada, geography, arithmetic, mental arithmetic, bookkeeping, pedagogy, agriculture, school law, hygiene, manners, and drawing.

For the Model Diploma :—In addition to the foregoing : Literature, history of France, history of England, algebra, geometry.

For the Academy Diploma :—In addition to the foregoing : Latin (optional), history of the United States, general history, cosmography, trigonometry, physics, chemistry, natural history, and philosophy.

A candidate who presents himself for a diploma authorizing him to teach in both languages, must pass in French and in English in the following subjects :—Grammar, dictation, literature, composition ; he must, moreover, pass in translating French into English, and *vice versa*.

The Course of Studies for public schools is spread over eight years. The first four years form the Elementary course, the fifth and sixth years form the Model School Course, and the last two years the Academic Course.

The subjects taught in the Elementary Course are :—Religious instruction, French and English, writing, arithmetic, geography, history, drawing, and useful knowledge.

The subjects taught in the Model School Course are the same as in the elementary course, and in addition, expressive reading, recitation, bookkeeping, commercial correspondence, map drawing, and object lessons.

The Academic Course contains, in addition to the foregoing : The large catechism, the history of the Catholic Church, literature, elocution, history of France, history of England, history of the United States, political economy, (in boys' schools), and domestic economy, (in girls' schools), as well as knitting, sewing and embroidery.

CONCLUSION.

We have briefly given the outlines of the Catholic School System of the Province of Quebec. The first development of this system dates from 1848. After the Act of the Union of the two Canadas, Dr. Meilleur was named Superintendent of Education. In the exercise of his difficult functions he displayed that energy and patriotism for which he was remarkable. At the very beginning of his career he had to surmount obstacle after obstacle, but he received the support of the clergy, and of the majority of the educated classes.

School municipalities were organized; schools were opened in many localities, and the seed soon bore good fruit. When, in 1854, after thirteen years of unremitting labor, Dr. Meilleur resigned, considerable progress had been made. The number of educational establishments of all kinds was 2,705, and the number of pupils attending them 119,737. The second Superintendent was the Honorable P. J. O. Chauveau. A man of brilliant talents, his nomination produced a marked effect on the people.

Following the suggestions which had been made in 1853 by a committee of the Legislative Assembly, presided over by the Honorable L. V. Sicotte, he introduced many reforms into our school system. Among these, we may mention the foundation of our present Provincial Normal Schools; the increase of school inspectors' salaries; school inspectors to be chosen from among teachers; the publishing of the *Journal of Education*, and of *Journal de l'Instruction Publique*, etc.

In 1867, the Honorable Mr. Chauveau became Premier of the Province of Quebec, but he did not immediately abandon the control of the Department of Public Instruction.

In 1875, the Honorable G. Ouimet, who had succeeded the Honorable P. Chauveau as Premier, became in his turn Superintendent of Public Instruction, a position which he occupied with honor to himself and advantage to the Province, for twenty years. During these twenty years, education made good progress.

In 1895, the Honorable G. Ouimet resigned, and the author of the present sketch was appointed Superintendent.

The progress of public instruction and the increase in the number of schools during the past fifty years, have been eminently satisfactory.

The clergy have contributed in a great measure to achieve this result.

The Province can boast of seventeen colleges founded and maintained by the clergy. The standard in institutions of secondary and superior education is high; many of the Professors have studied in European Universities, and the courses given in our institutions, we are convinced, are not inferior to any other courses given in the Dominion.

The teaching orders of women having model schools and academies under their control have multiplied, and they impart to their pupils an education both solid and brilliant.

These devoted women not only teach their pupils the different subjects of the course of studies, but they refine their manners, and inspire them with noble thoughts.

In these convents manual training is not neglected. The statistics of 1896, show that in the model schools and academies directed by Orders of Teaching, out of a total attendance of 37,337 children, 13,107 studied domestic economy, 16,772 learned knitting, and 12,704 learned sewing and embroidery.

The education of girls is certainly one of the serious questions of the day, and parents in confiding their daughters to the Religious Orders of Teaching Women, will know that while their intelligence will not suffer in the hands of these devoted and skilful teachers, their characters will be formed by the practice of every Christian virtue.

There are also Religious Orders of Men Teachers, whose establishments are increasing in number and importance from year to year.

Since some years they have founded several Commercial Colleges, which are favorably known to the business world. These Colleges are placed under the head of Academies in the Superintendent's report.

The number of Brothers teaching in Elementary and other

Schools, is.....	1,332
The number of Nuns is.....	2,512
The number of Laymen teaching is.....	729
The number of Laywomen teaching is.....	5,859

Giving a total of 10,432

At Confederation the total number of children attending school was 212,839. In 1897, the number had risen to 307,280.

The total number of Catholic Schools, including under this head Colleges and Universities, is 5848.

The average attendance of pupils enrolled in the Elementary Schools is seventy per cent., and of pupils enrolled in Model Schools and Academies, is eighty-three per cent.

Parents ardently desire to have their children educated, and we are convinced that the school population has entered on an era of intellectual progress which will keep pace with the material development of the Province.

